

LIKE DAUGHTER/LIKE FATHER

when my daughter was in kindergarten
her teacher, a Christian,
sent her to the school nurse
because she had forgotten to put on underpants.

this morning, on the first day
of my poetry workshops at a local elementary school,
the regular teacher,
the sort who is strict with kids because
he's scared of them,
gestured me urgently to him
as they were working on the obligatory wish-poem.
"I thought I'd better tell you," he whispered,
"that when you bent over to pick up the chalk,
the students in the back could see your shorts."
"Yeah?" I said, thinking they were lucky not to
have been treated to the full-flush spectacular
of the crack of my ass.
"Yes," he said, "they picked up on it right away."
"Well, look," I said, "there isn't really much
I can do about it right now is there?"

"Well," he said, "for God's sake, don't bend over!"

he wasn't real thrilled either
at the character, Fat Annie, who kept occurring
in the boys' poems.
I thought she was a new cartoon character
that I just hadn't heard of,
but it turned out she was a little girl in the class.
I felt bad about that one myself,
and I'm sure I didn't do a hell of a lot
for her appreciation of literature.

in fact, I'd like to apologize to her right now,
even though the guys did come up with some
imaginative workings of her into their poems.
one wrote, "I wish I had a motorcycle with five engines
which would be just big enough
to flatten Fat Annie."
and another dreamed, "I am a wide receiver
for the Oakland Raiders
and I go deep for a pass from Kenny Stabler
and it reaches me in the corner of the end zone
and I jump up and catch it
and flatten Fat Annie."

I also want to apologize to my daughter
for bringing up the embarrassment of the underpants.
one day perhaps the pen will be in the other hand.